



THE STATE OF TRANSPORTATION EQUITY IN UTAH: **AN EVOLVING MOVEMENT**





Purpose of Article

In partnership with transportation, equity, and planning stakeholders, the Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs has prepared this paper to inform policy makers, community-based organizations, community advocates, and interested researchers to better understand the disparities that exist in transportation access. This document also presents equity efforts that statewide agencies are engaged in, some of which have been enhanced related to COVID-19 impacts. The hope is that the strategies employed during the pandemic that increased equitable engagement and resource distribution to historically underserved communities maintains its momentum through ongoing recovery. We invite more transportation equity partners to institutionalize multi-sectoral and wide-reaching interventions to reduce transportation barriers with a systemic lens, looking to not only increase the navigability of space, but also boost health outcomes and address the effects of exclusionary policies in the process.

Other sections of the report include:

- An introduction to transportation equity and historical context on a nationwide scale,
- A discussion on current data-gathering practices related to transportation equity in Utah and the opportunities that exist to collect and better engage community-level feedback,
- A recommendations section for broad actions that can be taken,
- And a conclusion that summarizes the overall trajectory of transportation equity based on entity-specific efforts.

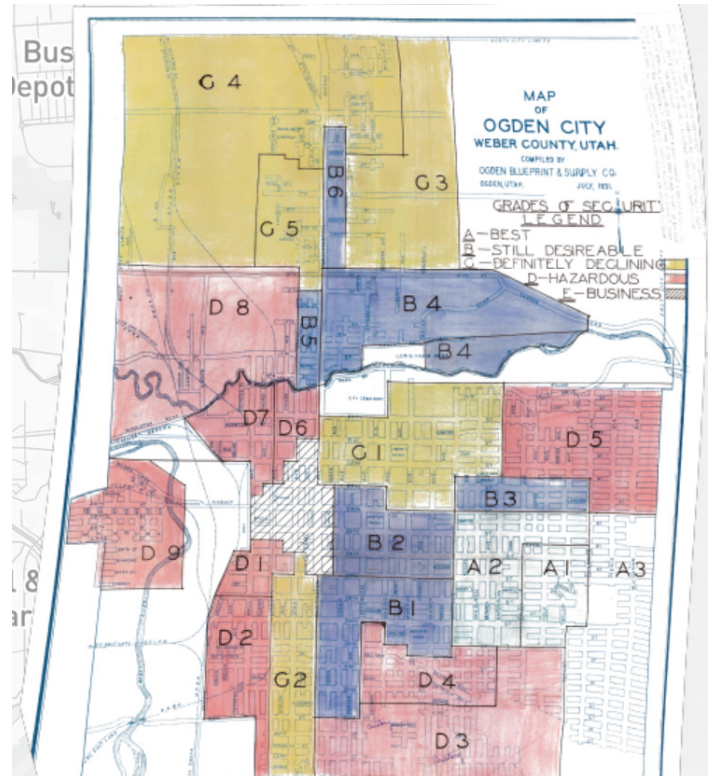
INTRODUCTION

The History of the Ability to Thrive in Place

The future of our cities will be determined by how well we can navigate them, as well as how we can acknowledge history to move forward together and promote systemic healing for disenfranchised communities.

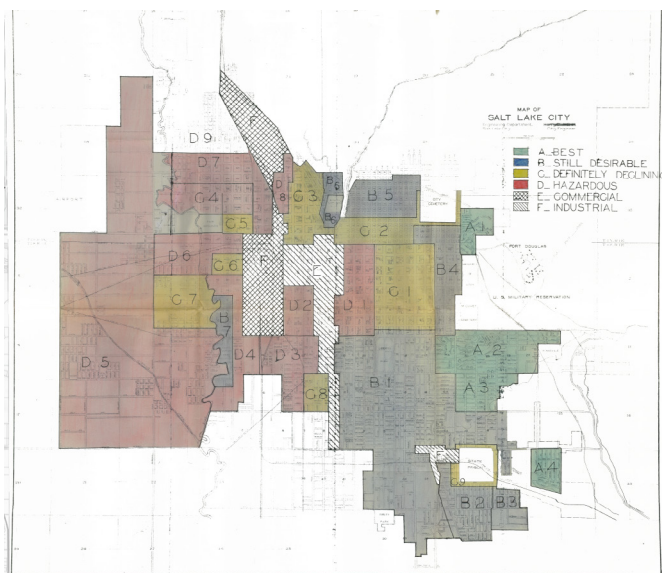
Modern society has innovated many modes of navigation, such as cars, roadways, public transit, biking, walking, as well as digital access (through the Internet and broadband) that continues to transform the how and where we work. Throughout these innovations, what has remained constant is the fact that the more freely people can navigate their spaces, the easier it is to thrive in all areas. But what continues to be necessary is proper design and thoughtful infrastructure and connectivity to make sure that all communities can access the transportation modes that best suit their needs and the demands of their lives. This can be influenced by a person's unique social, cultural, and economic environments.

Communities that have been challenged in navigating their spaces through the most human-centered modes such as walking and biking, have also borne the brunt of racism, classism, and socioeconomic inequities. Across decades in the U.S., racial geography has changed, but the inequities remain from a transportation system that was designed to be exclusionary from the beginning. Communities that experienced [racial redlining](#) (the systematic segregation and discrimination against racial and ethnic minorities through exclusionary housing policies) still struggle with housing, health, and



1931 Ogden City redlining map. Credit: Mapping Inequality, University of Richmond.

socioeconomic insecurities in modern day (Perry et al., 2019). Many families continue to face the realities of food deserts, where grocery and food markets with more fresh food are scarce, because they may lack access to a car in a car centric society or because the land use relationships in their area do not prioritize these establishments (Snyder, 2011). Most recently, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, those who solely relied on public transit services were also more likely to be providing essential services, having a limited safety net in terms of workforce protections as well as being unable to quarantine themselves safely in the case of COVID-19 infection (due to multigenerational housing or simply the lack of paid sick leave). Access to dependable, affordable public transportation has proved to be more important than ever. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); people with disabilities; the elderly; people in rural Utah, and people with irregular work schedules often face significant barriers to finding safe and affordable means of transportation to work. These barriers, however, existed long before COVID-19 began but the pandemic has heightened our awareness around the need for greater access to better address the exacerbated impacts to community well-being.



1940 Salt Lake City redlining map. Credit: Mapping Inequality, University of Richmond.

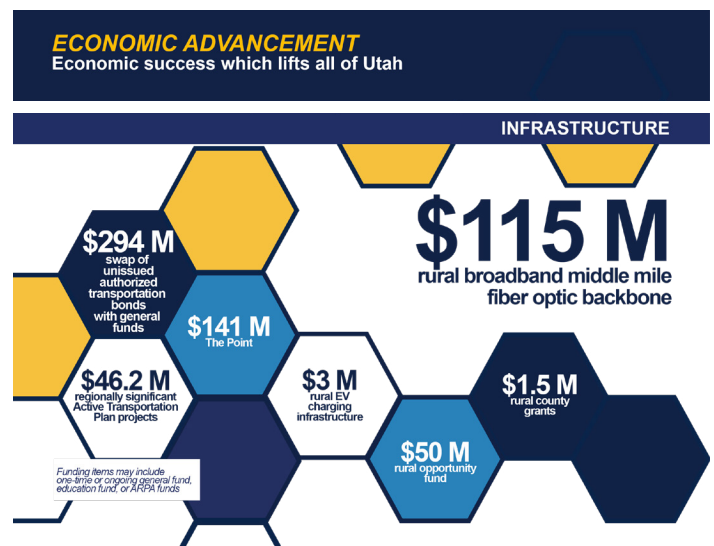
The car, road, and highways have shaped our networks and land uses to the point where walking, biking, and transit, more human-centered modes, have perhaps taken a back seat at times. According to a 2019 consumer report survey by the Federal Reserve, car-centric infrastructure has perpetuated exclusionary policies that have decreased access to jobs and services for BIPOC and other marginalized groups who come from low income areas (Bhutta et al., 2020). Exclusionary policies such as redlining, gerrymandering, and **arrested mobility**—defined as the systemically debilitating effects of over-policing BIPOC communities—have impeded navigability and therefore social capital for these groups (Reid, 2021). For example, Black residents, on average at the national scale, have one-tenth the wealth of non-Hispanic White residents, and Hispanic residents have less than one-fifth (McIntosh, 2020). As outlined by the Urban Institute, “[t]hese wealth disparities make it harder to purchase a car, reducing access to jobs, and are one reason a disproportionate number of people of color rely on public transit” (Davis et al., 2021). The Pew Research Center reported that in 2016, 34 percent of Black people and 27 percent of Hispanic people reported taking public transit daily or weekly, compared with 14 percent of White people (Anderson, 2016).



In Utah, however, the large majority of **Utah Transit Authority** riders identified as White at 76%, with Hispanic/Latino riders representing a smaller percentage at 13% (Resource Systems Group, 2020). When compared to the demographic breakdowns of the locations of bus, TRAX, and FrontRunner stations, many areas are directly adjacent to more affluent, largely metropolitan communities, calling on the need to assess placement of services beyond tax-base and traditional planning methods (UTA Service Choices, 2019). Equitable transportation should not only include increasing funding and advocacy for public transit and access for all communities, but should also consider how we fund it so low-income areas and those with smaller tax bases are not looked over for transit hubs based on barriers to wealth generation and systemic inequities.

Utah lawmakers passed a **bill** during the 2021 Legislative Session that commits a \$1.1 billion spending plan for transportation infrastructure with over \$300 million for transit (Schultz et al., 2021). The bill was the largest transit infrastructure spending package in the state’s history

and will commit funding to a variety of projects including double-tracking sections of FrontRunner, improvements to the S-line streetcar, establishing a bus rapid transit in the Salt Lake Valley, and developing an environmental study at the Point of the Mountain near Draper where traffic and congestion is significantly high, (Schultz et al., 2021). This legislation was developed to fund transportation projects that had been planned and prioritized through Utah’s comprehensive, multi-modal Unified Transportation Plan (Utah’s Unified Transportation Plan Partners, 2020). Additionally, in December of 2021, Governor Cox and Lt. Governor Henderson announced their fiscal year 2023 budget proposal and included \$46 million dollars to finish regionally significant active transportation projects to improve connectivity and quality of life benefits (Utah Governor’s Office, 2021). These proposed and ongoing investments are perhaps a manifestation of Utah’s growing awareness of the intersectional impact of transportation options for those most underserved, as the pandemic has magnified the fact that when this is not centered, connectivity, healthy outcomes, and proximity to resources all suffer



Proposals to improve various areas of Utah’s infrastructure, including \$46.2 million to go to active transportation projects according to **Utah Governor’s Office of Planning and Budget**.

(Woodruff, 2021). These capital project investments should be paired with consideration of currently preferred transportation modes, such as local bus services, and other mobility options to ensure effective community access as experts continue to research the transportation patterns of different groups.

EQUITY IN ALL POLICIES APPROACH

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, equity has become a term more commonly used when discussing access to testing, vaccinations, information delivery as well as the distribution of available resources to mitigate the impacts of the public health crisis. Equity also has ties to transportation through the social determinants of health, which is a theory to explain how the conditions in which “people are born, grow, live, work and age as well as the complex, interrelated social structures and economic systems that shape these conditions,” all compound to determine the opportunities available to a community (CDC, 2019). Public health and policy experts now and well before the pandemic have asserted that when health, opportunity, and access are part of the equation for infrastructure development, everyone benefits. This impact can be multigenerational, wide-reaching, and systemic in nature, effectively calling for an “equity in all policies approach.” When discussing transportation equity in the Utah context, it is important to note that many major employers and significant health systems offer employees UTA pass options through organizational programs. This has been a corporate and working benefit

for many commuters looking to avoid rush hour traffic, but during COVID-19, we have seen this model applied by UTA through their [Free Fare to Vaccination program](#) to increase vaccine access primarily for communities with limited access to a car or transit service in order to make their appointments (UTA, 2021). [Lyft and Uber](#) have also offered a similar service. The hope is that the strategy does not stop there and more transportation equity partners employ multi-sectoral, wide-reaching interventions to reduce transportation barriers with a systemic lens, looking to not only increase the navigability of space, but also boost health outcomes and address the effects of exclusionary policies in the process.



EQUITY LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM CURRENT TRANSPORTATION DATA IN UTAH

To explore the COVID-19 impacts on health, social good, and equity, a literature review and gap analysis was performed by the authors of this report on transportation data by using both the [UTA open data portal](#) and the [UDOT open data portal](#) (specifically information on the [Zero Fatalities program](#)) to better understand how Utahns' transportation experience was affected. This section will first present key takeaways learned from reviewing existing data. Then a discussion will be presented on the uneven burdens on BIPOC communities and potential gaps in quantitative datasets which may present opportunities to better understand the intersectional impact of transportation equity in Utah.

KEY TRANSIT DATA TAKEAWAYS:

- Ridership downturn from COVID-19 was steeper for FrontRunner and slower to recover in comparison to bus and TRAX, which are more utilized by racially and ethnically diverse groups.
- Bus and TRAX riders who have less flexibility to work from home or have limited access to a personal vehicle during the pandemic were also more likely to be Hispanic/Latino or from a BIPOC community.
- Non-White workers accounted for less than ¼ of Utah workers in affected sectors yet bore the brunt of almost ¾ of the COVID-19 caseload during the onset of the pandemic. Non-White workers were also more likely to take public transit, suggesting that non-White workers had to resort to navigate more exposed public spaces because of limited remote work and isolated travel options.

KEY ROADWAY & TRAFFIC SAFETY DATA TAKEAWAYS:

- Roadway fatalities, and serious injuries increased during the pandemic, despite traffic volumes decreasing due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- Crash risk among diverse populations, particularly Native American and Hispanic/Latino groups, were shown to be significantly higher during a 2019 technical assessment provided to the Utah Department of Transportation. These trends should be explored through a COVID-19 recovery lens.
- Lack of roadway connectivity has caused barriers in resource access and delivery for rural areas, especially

Native American populations that reside in or near reservations. Likewise, the historical pattern of high-speed roadways and highways being located near low-income and racially and ethnically diverse communities have induced health and navigation barriers which were exacerbated during COVID-19.

PANDEMIC TRANSIT DATA

Figure 1 (below) shows UTA ridership by mode. All bus ridership data is presented in aggregate, alongside FrontRunner (a commuter train that connects Salt Lake City with surrounding municipalities) and TRAX (a light rail system primarily within Salt Lake City and County). According to the existing data, there was a massive downturn in ridership across all modes beginning in March 2020 at the onset of the pandemic crisis. However, FrontRunner ridership did not recover much of the lost ridership as the pandemic continued through 2020 up until September, while the TRAX and bus ridership recovered more of their ridership. The data is presented from January through September of 2020 to capture the period where transit was the most impacted by closures and stay-at-home orders.

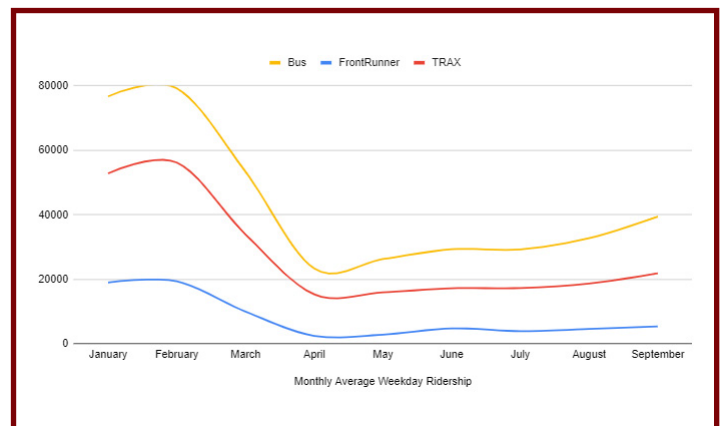


Figure 1. 2020 UTA Ridership by Mode

The differences in ridership by mode could be explained by the demographics of riders on distinct types of public transportation. This hypothesis aligns well with the data gathered for this project and existing literature, which suggests FrontRunner riders are more likely to be commuters with incomes similar to those with access to a personal vehicle while bus patrons may have less

flexible mode options due to income or other social factors (Taylor et al., 2015). A study that interviewed northern Utah public transit riders also showed similar trends: roughly two in three (68%) respondents reported earning less than \$15,000 per year (Jansuwan, 2013). Nationwide, those in the top decile of wealth reduced their mobility during the pandemic crisis up to twice as much as those in the bottom decile, therefore exposing themselves to the virus at much lower rates (Fraiberger, et al., 2020). Bus and TRAX riders are more likely to be labor workers of “essential” sectors and less likely to work from home during the pandemic and therefore more likely to be exposed to the virus. Utahns who rely on buses or the TRAX system have (1) had to return to work at a greater rate than FrontRunner riders, and/or (2) lack alternatives to public transit that are available to FrontRunner riders, such as owning and using private vehicles for transportation. Many BIPOC and Hispanic/Latino communities are in these situations based on community-based organizations and community health workers reports to the COVID-19 Multicultural Advisory Committee. This hypothesis is well-supported by the [Utah Transit Authority Onboard Survey](#) data that Figures 2 and 3 (below) illustrate. Figure 2 shows that a majority of UTA riders use transit for travel between work and home and Figure 3 shows that bus and TRAX riders are far less likely to own a personal vehicle (32% for bus compared to just 7% for FrontRunner).

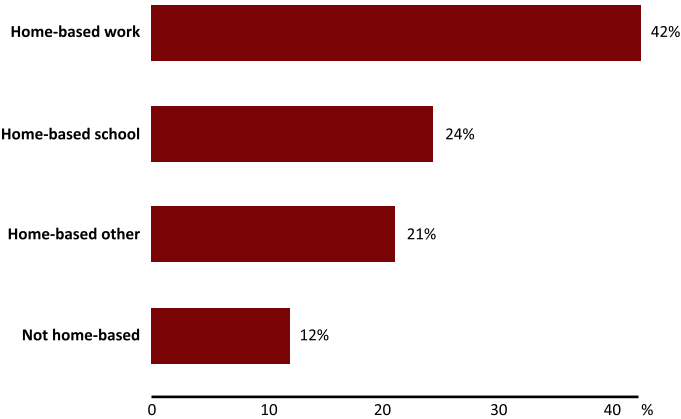


Figure 2. 2020 UTA Ridership by Purpose of Trip 2020

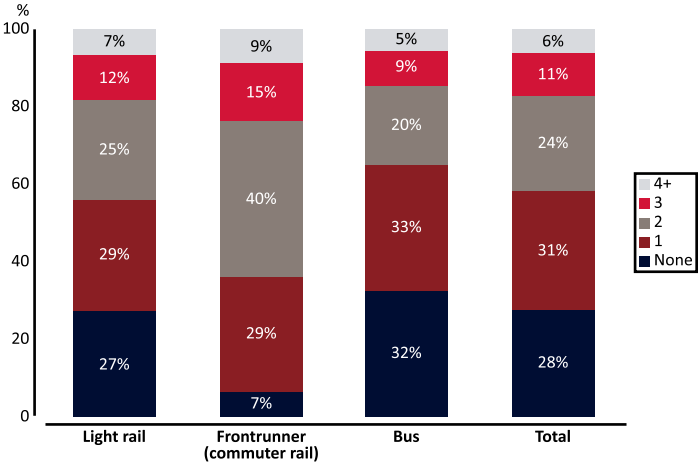


Figure 3. Number of Vehicles in Household 2020

PANDEMIC RELATED TRAFFIC & ROADWAY DATA

During the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the [Utah Transportation Commission](#) reported that traffic volume and crashes were at all time lows because of COVID-19 restrictions keeping more people home and because of an increase in remote work. However, data from [Zero Fatalities](#), a public awareness program aimed at reducing road-related fatalities, showed that deaths and serious injuries on Utah’s roadways had actually increased. At the end of 2020, there were 276 total fatalities and 1,544 serious injuries, both higher counts than any of the three years prior (UDOT Zero Fatalities Dashboard, n.d.; Zero Fatalities Statistics, 2021).

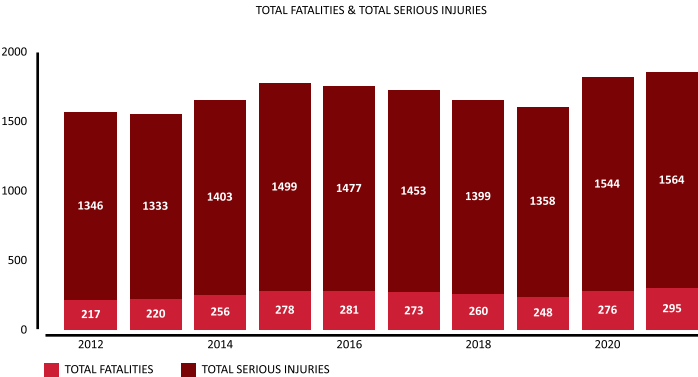


Figure 4: Total fatalities and total serious injuries on Utah’s roadways as of Dec. 13th, 2021.

In a 2020 Salt Lake Tribune article, Transportation Commissioner Wayne Barlow said, “those who are inclined to speed way over the limit see an almost empty road and it probably encourages them to have the lead foot” ([Davidson, 2020](#)). These trends continued into 2021 as Utah exceeded 2020 counts in both fatalities

and serious injuries, indicating that this inclination to speed has yet to be addressed (UDOT Zero Fatalities Dashboard, n.d.; Zero Fatalities Statistics, 2021). Assessing further related-actions and perceptions to what has and continues to cause these tragic events on Utah's roads also urges a more disaggregated and local-level overview to understand which communities require more close attention and outreach to mitigate fatality and injuries.

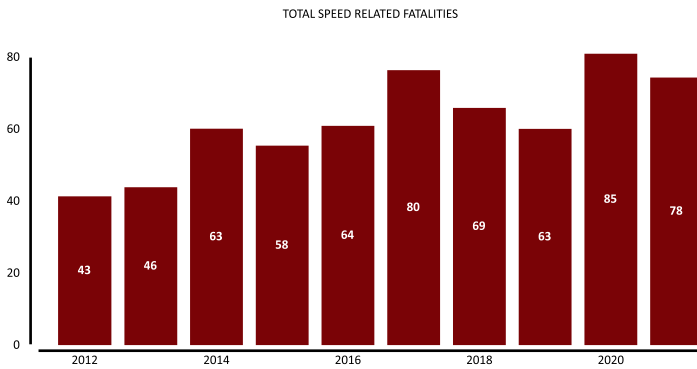


Figure 5: Total speed related fatalities on Utah's roadways as of Dec. 13th, 2021.

A technical report presented to the Utah Department of Transportation in 2019 on [“The Impact of Demographics on Crash Risk in Diverse Communities in Utah,”](#) showed that crash risk has been tied to gender, age, race/ethnicity, employment, educational attainment, household size and even marital status at local and national levels (Burbidge, 2019). In analyzing these trends in a Utah context, the research showed how “different crash types cluster across demographic groups and different geographic areas based on population characteristics” and in turn, identified risk factors for specific communities based on population concentration and crash prevalence (Burbidge, 2019).

Key findings showed that Native American communities' crash risk was highest in urban areas where speed limits were high and traffic flow designs did not accommodate walking and biking patterns. Rural communities of this demographic are also affected in this way as roadways and walking/biking pathways are less connected and more accommodating to high-speed cars (Quick et al., 2018). In addition to infrastructure influences, community concentration was also identified as a correlating factor to crash risk (Burbidge, 2019). As of 2019, for each percentage increase in the population of Native Americans in a specific area, the probability of a pedestrian crash increased by 700% (Burbidge, 2019). Additionally, Hispanic/Latino crash risk was highest in urban areas in all instances, except for crashes involving a fixed object. This followed national trends which also showed Hispanic/Latino populations to have the second highest rate of crash fatalities among racially and ethnically diverse groups (Burbidge, 2019). However, focusing on crash risk correlation to population concentration may not capture all relevant factors which community perceptions and narratives can further inform.

Specific connections to pandemic response have been showcased through the lack of roadway connectivity that has caused barriers in emergency care access and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) delivery for rural areas, especially Native American populations that reside in or near reservations (Chen et al., 2021; Sen et al., 2021). Health inequities were exacerbated by the lack of infrastructure to support timely resource delivery and access. Likewise, the long pattern of high-speed roadways and highways being located near low-income and racially and ethnically diverse communities has induced barriers to navigation and healthy living because of negative externalities like air pollution and limited mobility options.



UNEVEN BURDEN ON BIPOC COMMUNITIES

Transit Related

During the height of the pandemic in 2020 about $\frac{1}{3}$ of Utahns worked from home, but some sectors were hit much harder than others (Knold, 2021). In particular, sectors like construction and food services, where more Hispanic/Latino and BIPOC workers were employed, showed that only about 1 in 10 workers were able to perform their duties remotely (Knold, 2021). This uneven burden of working in-person during the pandemic also affected the COVID-19 caseload of these communities. Just 14% of Utah's population identified as Hispanic/Latino, yet that demographic accounted for over 30% of COVID cases in Utah at the height of the pandemic. (KFF, 2021). Data from a Utah Department of Health (UDOH) report from 2020 (shown in Figure 6) shows that despite representing only 24% of workers in all affected sectors, Hispanic/Latino and non-White workers in Utah accounted for a staggering 73% of workplace outbreak-associated COVID cases (Bui, 2020). These data points help to further affirm that public transit ridership did not dip as low and also recovered more quickly from the crisis because the riders on these modes were more likely to be frontline service workers with limited access to remote work options and personal vehicles. This helps to explain the data captured in Figure 7. Despite a growing outbreak of COVID cases, ridership continued to rise, particularly on bus and TRAX because riders needed to use transit for essential travel such as getting to work, getting groceries, and accessing healthcare and other critical services. As can be seen in Figure 8, a recent UTA report shows that about a quarter of UTA riders are racial and

ethnic minorities, 3% higher than the state's non-White population overall (Utah Transit Authority - Title VI, 2019; United States Census Bureau, 2021).

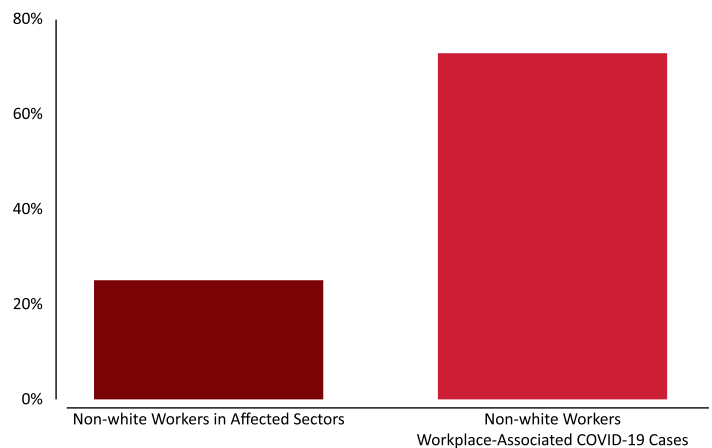


Figure 6: Racial Disparities in COVID-19 Workplace Outbreaks in 2020

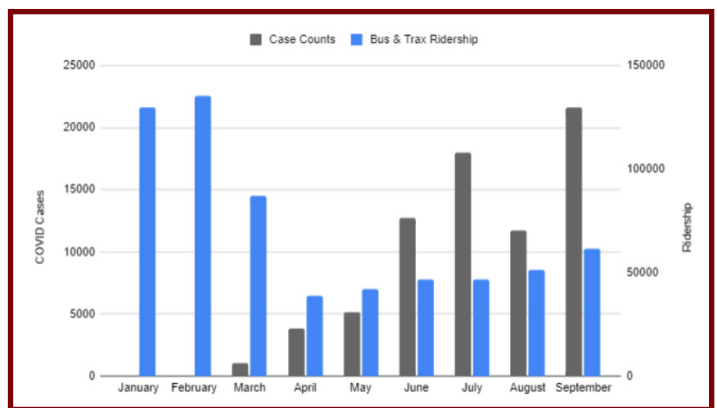


Figure 7: Utah COVID-19 Cases and 2020 Bus & Trax Ridership



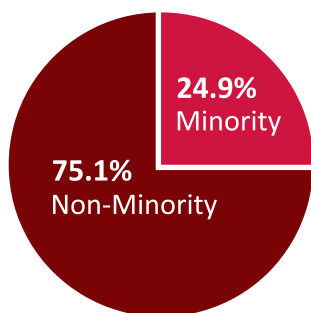


Figure 8: Porportion of racially and ethnically minoritized UTA riders in 2020

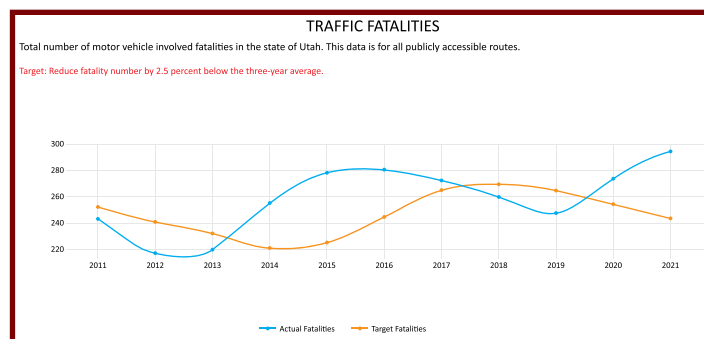


Figure 9: Traffic fatality counts and target goals between 2011 and 2021 as of Dec. 13th, 2021

INCORPORATING COMMUNITY NARRATIVES & EQUITY INDICATORS TO BRIDGE DATA GAP

After conducting the research and literature review for this project, it was clear that qualitative and demographic-related data is needed to more fully capture the personal experiences that BIPOC communities have had with transportation throughout the COVID-19 crisis to inform inequities in transportation safety beyond the pandemic. Disaggregated data according to race, ethnicity, low income, and other equity indicators are recommended to better understand disparities in resource access, crash risk, and transportation opportunities. As discussed earlier in this brief, the intersectional impacts of health on systematic disparities helps explain why the pandemic has impacted BIPOC communities more severely, but the available data may not fully account for the driving factors and community perceptions that are relevant to preferred transportation modes. With this, the data and statistics cannot bear out the full lived-experience of disenfranchised communities, therefore a more active role in reciprocal and trust-building engagement would assist “ground truthing” the hard data. Overall, we believe a gap exists between the traditionally relied upon data and people’s lived experiences with transportation. Incorporating individual experiences and perceptions can help root transportation processes in community-driven solutions. The following section contains direct quotes from community members to better depict frontline narratives with transportation in Utah.

Roadway Related

In addition to public transit impacts, the roadway experience for Utahns was likewise affected as fatalities and serious injuries increased during the pandemic, despite traffic volumes decreasing due to COVID-19 restrictions. Crash risk among diverse populations, particularly Native American and Hispanic/Latino groups, were shown to be significantly higher by the referenced 2019 technical assessment provided to the Utah Department of Transportation. While these findings are from a year earlier than the onset of the pandemic, it is inferred that these disparities remained significant into COVID-19 (Burbidge, 2019). The state’s annual target fatality goals, represented by the orange line in Figure 9, has fluctuated over recent years, but particularly in 2020 and 2021, those goals have not been met. The gap indicates that there are persisting factors that are yet to be addressed (UDOT Zero Fatalities Dashboard, n.d.; Zero Fatalities Statistics, 2021b).

Like most of the health and socioeconomic disparities analyzed during this pandemic, these systemic inequities were not created by the pandemic, but rather exacerbated by it. The lack of roadway connectivity has caused barriers in resource access and delivery for rural areas, especially Native American populations that reside in or near reservations. Likewise, the historical pattern of high-speed roadways and highways being located near low-income and racially and ethnically diverse communities have induced health and navigation disparities which were exacerbated during COVID-19. There is no one strategy that will address these issues as a whole, but equitable access and systemic factors should be what guides ongoing COVID-19 recovery lens.

COMMUNITY VOICES IN TRANSPORTATION EQUITY

“With the recent rise of anti-Asian violence, less and less people are keen to take public transportation **in case they experience a hate crime on the bus**. That’s something we’ve seen more recently with our communities.” (Asian Community Advocate)

“During COVID, destinations where they shut down any kind of walk up, and only did **drive thru or curbside access, really limited a way to access it as a pedestrian**. You plan out this whole logistical journey as someone without a car, you make those plans in advance, you execute this plan the whole time being nervous you're gonna miss a bus or [it's going] to be really hot outside, only to get there and **realize that you have the additional barrier of figuring out how to access these services**, because you don’t have a car.” (Frontline Service Provider)

“I think the transportation community in the field is made up of folks that ask how things can be quicker? How can we be more efficient? How do we expand? How do we make this cheaper but better? But we are forgetting that the focus is how humans experience transportation...it should be **empathy, over efficiency**. Only meeting efficiency is really hurting our bottom line, which is serving the community.” (Frontline Service Provider)

“**Safety & comfort in transportation is relative**...it depends on the location and the familiarity to that location...I always knew and had to be aware—you know, especially **living in that intersectionality** of being a woman of color in certain spaces—I knew that I had to make sure that I was home by a certain time not being downtown too late...I was fearful of being in certain spaces.” (Community Advocate)

“We need humility from transportation entities in how they're approaching all of this, sometimes recognizing how little they know about communities’ needs. I think it goes back to the **representation of who is making decisions and for who**.” (Community Advocate)



CURRENT LANDSCAPE: TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES

Transportation equity must be led by data-informed practices that center the experience of those most historically marginalized. There are projects and initiative-specific efforts underway among Utah's statewide transportation entities that are worth noting and have the potential to set the tone for how we build trust and co-create solutions with underrepresented communities related to their transportation needs. Consider the following overview of these activities from major state and regional transportation entities in Utah, many in response to the growing disparities amplified by COVID-19. This is a non-exhaustive list of efforts, but showcases each agency's move toward bringing equity to the forefront of conversations and working to embed it in workplace and service model culture.

The following initiatives were compiled at the end of 2021. Information may have since changed according to organizational capacity and direction. Please visit the respective organizations' website for more information.



MOUNTAINLAND ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

Mountain Association of Governments (MAG) is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Utah County area and also serves as an association of governments (AOG) for Utah, Summit and Wasatch Counties of Utah. Along with transportation, their focus areas include aging services, community and economic development, and planning for growth. Transportation

equity manifests itself in their efforts to advocate for local issues, increase access to funding and services for vulnerable populations, and build on regional collaboration for systemic impact.

- **Demographic Analysis of Bus Rapid Transit Line.** In partnership with UTA, MAG is looking to expand the bus-rapid transit line (UVX) in south Provo, particularly along State Street in Utah County, where a large portion of the Hispanic/Latino population resides. This would address connectivity issues between the Provo-Orem area and key destinations such as grocery stores, medical services, and schools.
- **Increased Capacity for Translation & Interpretation Services.** Language access has become a core element of customer service for MAG. They now provide Spanish translation for major documents, project-specific translations of target languages, and customized interpretation for those seeking frontline services related to informed aging care, grants, weatherization assistance, and other home services.
- **Smart-Growth & Justice Emphasis of TransPlan50.** The [TransPlan50](#) is the regional transportation plan for urban Utah County that will adjust to rising population growth into 2050 while minimizing environmental and socioeconomic impact to affected groups.

UTAH DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

The Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) is more than just roads. UDOT is responsible for providing transportation choices through multimodal transportation systems that strengthen the economy and enhance quality of life in communities throughout the state. Roads, transit and active transportation must all work together to complement each other. The Utah Department of Transportation provides transportation planning services in collaboration with MPOs in urban areas, and as the lead transportation planning entity in rural areas, particularly for long-range planning services related to road maintenance and development, transit, active transportation, and strategic collaboration. They are currently seeking partnerships with justice-centered agencies and organizations to build greater awareness for transportation equity needs.

- **Adjusted Mission Statement for People-Centric Solutions.** With a revised mission statement to “Enhance quality of life through transportation” introduced in January 2021, there is an opportunity to open up discussions of what quality of life means for various user groups and demographics within Utah. Already, UDOT has been placing more emphasis on multi-modal transportation solutions and moving people, not cars. This human-centric approach is consistent with the organization’s three core values of Respect, Integrity and Caring. These core values establish behavioral expectations and serve as a guide to principled decision making that puts people first.
- **Collaborative Partnerships for Equity.** UDOT is a signatory to the [Utah Compact on Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) committing themselves to operationalize anti-racist principles and actions into their frameworks. UDOT has also recently formed an employee-based multi-disciplinary team to develop a department strategy for equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Services.** Individuals that have a limited ability to speak, write or understand English may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a service, benefit, or encounter. This service and oversight is the responsibility of the UDOT Civil Rights Office. Agencies that receive federal funding must improve the language accessibility and break down language barriers by implementing consistent standards of language assistance among all recipients of federal financial assistance.
- **Transportation Equity Memo to U.S. Department of Transportation.** UDOT, in partnership with the Utah Division of Multicultural Affairs, has submitted a comment regarding performance measures for transportation equity to be implemented at the federal level, which has the potential to impact federally funded projects and initiatives that place emphasis on accessibility and infrastructure gaps affecting areas experiencing heightened racial & ethnic inequities.
- **UDOT Civil Rights Office.** The UDOT Civil Rights Office provides continuous leadership, guidance, technical assistance and training to ensure ongoing compliance with Title VI and related statutes to ensure equal access, respect, and upholding of an individual’s civil rights.
- **UDOT Signal Operations and Maintenance and New and Rebuilt Traffic Signals.** Delivering inclusive and equitable signal operations systems that benefit all modes of transportation and all road users is a primary focus of UDOT Signal Ops and Maintenance and New and Rebuilt Traffic Signals. These programs find, develop and deploy devices that improve operations and safety. Examples of improvements include better lighting that can improve visibility and operational adjustments to signals that give more green light time to pedestrians.



UTAH TRANSIT AUTHORITY

The Utah Transit Authority (UTA) is a transit service provider that serves Utah across the Wasatch Front and specific districts. They commit themselves to provide an “integrated system of innovative, accessible and efficient public transportation services that increase access to opportunities and contribute to a healthy environment”, aligned with [Title VI](#) requirements. As the state’s largest public transit provider, they are uniquely positioned to advocate and implement equity efforts that improve community connectivity at wide-scale and rate that is economically, environmentally, and socially beneficial. While there is further work to be done, UTA is invested in the following projects and resources that have the potential to improve transportation equity in the short and long term.

- **Affordability Efforts.** UTA is exploring partnerships and avenues to make fares more affordable for socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Visit their [website](#) for more information.
 - **Low-Income Pass Program** – A pass program providing eligible community-serving organizations with access discounted passes for their low-income clients.
 - **Low-Income Program for the Public** – A public program for low-income residents of Utah.
 - **Fare-capping via FAREPAY Pilot** – Having a fare capping policy means that once a rider using a transit card taps enough times to reach the cost of a daily, weekly, or 30-day pass, they are no longer charged for any additional trips for the duration of the appropriate multi-day pass.
 - **Reduced Fare for Youth, People with Disabilities, and Older Adults/Seniors** – Eligible users receive 50% off regular fare and children under 6 ride free with an adult.
 - **Horizon Reduced Fare** – A program for low-income users that qualify for Utah Horizon EBT discounted at 50%.
 - **Free Fare for COVID-19 Vaccinations** – Now through June 30, 2022.

UTA is uniquely positioned to... improve community connectivity at wide-scale

- **Collaboration for Accessibility.** UTA’s [Committee on Accessible Transportation](#) is a diverse group representing various disabilities to present unique perspectives on how to improve rider experiences and advocate for improved accessibility in public transit services.
- **Diversification of the UTA Community Advisory Committee.** Efforts are being made to apply an equity lens to UTA’s Community Advisory Committee (established in 2017) through targeted recruitment of underrepresented groups through nominations from justice-centered organizations.
- **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise.** UTA works with small businesses that may qualify as a [Disadvantaged Business Enterprise](#) and be eligible for transit ridership contracts to improve the mobility of employees who may have limited options.
- **Embedding Demographic Questions in Public Surveys.** UTA is developing a demographic question module to be applied to all UTA public surveys to assess representation and inclusion in feedback opportunities, as well as identify gaps.
- **Equity Gap Analysis in Five Year Service Plan.** Within 2021, UTA will conduct a series of small case transit studies, as part of their [Five Year Service Plan](#) (2021-2025), with local planning agencies to identify access issues. Community engagement and feedback sessions will be conducted in tandem to expand access while building trust and reciprocal relationships with underrepresented groups.
- **Internal Inclusion and Belonging Initiative.** Standards are being adopted to foster inclusion and belonging among UTA’s workplace environment as a way to increase retention and recruitment of diverse individuals.
- **Targeted Marketing & Engagement Partnerships.** UTA is also exploring paid partnerships with community-specific organizations to improve and enhance the reach of engagement efforts.
- **UTA’s Open Data Portal.** Their [open data portal](#) shares service and ridership data across UTA’s various modes (Trax, Bus, Frontrunner) with over 6,000 stops detailing unique areas. This database can prove helpful to researchers, community organizations, and policymakers in understanding the localized need for more robust transit services in areas experiencing systemic inequities.

WASATCH FRONT REGIONAL COUNCIL

The Wasatch Front Regional Council (WFRC) is dedicated to developing regional plans that respond to population growth and infrastructure needs within the Box Elder, Davis, Morgan, Salt Lake, Tooele, and Weber counties. They are keenly dedicated to operationalizing equity into their long-range planning efforts to ensure that all communities in their service area can benefit from a more connected, economically vibrant, and sustainable environment.

- **Access to Opportunities Index.** WFRC utilizes an [Access to Opportunities Index](#) into the Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program to “promot[e] affordable and reliable transportation options based on the needs of the populations being served—particularly populations that are traditionally underserved.” This is a strategic and systemic approach to identifying equity-focus areas. This index combines the load of transit and transportation systems during rush hour, and factors in the distribution of households and workplaces around the region to describe the efficiency of how people in an area can easily navigate between home, work, and other key destinations.
- **Human-Centered Narratives in Regional Transportation Plans.** WFRC is incorporating human-centered narratives in all future rounds of regional transportation plans to understand and showcase that quantitative data is not the sole driver of outcome, but that organizations should be co-creating solutions with the communities that benefit from the end goal.
- **Regional Transportation Plan.** The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the transportation element of the Wasatch Choice Regional Vision. This plan outlines and prioritizes various transportation projects including those for roadways, transit and active transportation. Outreach to stakeholders and partners for the RTP happens continually during each planning cycle. This includes a component to holding annual outreach for stakeholders and providers that represent historically underserved and underrepresented communities to seek their input and engagement on the plan.
- **The Wasatch Choice Regional Vision.** The [Wasatch Choice Regional Vision](#) is a locally driven approach, led by the Wasatch Front Regional Council, in which cities, counties, community organizations, transportation partners, businesses, the public, and others help to create and implement sustainable land use and transportation future together, creating local solutions

with regional significance and leading with equity. All agencies included in this paper, in collaboration with local cities and other organizations across the Wasatch Front, are involved to advance the Regional Vision.

- **Wasatch Choice Community Advisory Committee.** WFRC is working to create this committee built upon the goal that all communities have access to opportunities for work, education, and other essential destinations, and the recognition that land use and transportation policies have a history of perpetuating racial and economic inequities in America. The purpose of this Advisory Committee is to enhance the engagement of diverse communities and apply an equity lens to the Wasatch Choice Regional Vision and advise the Wasatch Choice partner agencies on transportation and land use decisions. This Advisory Committee will create a forum/dialogue for enhancing awareness and understanding of the needs and priorities of diverse communities and promoting equity in the region. Advisory Committee members can make recommendations on issues and analyses potentially relevant to the needs and circumstances of diverse populations in the region.
- **WFRC Equity Planning Resources.** [WFRC’s webpage](#) highlights why equity is relevant and important to WFRC’s work in regional transportation planning. The page includes additional resources such as an equity story map, which will provide interactive datasets, historical maps, and progress on improving equity in planning that is specific to the region.

CROSS-AGENCY EFFORTS

The following points are examples of cross-agency efforts in transportation equity that are geared towards statewide impact.

- **COVID-19 Multicultural Advisory Committee Participation.** Leadership and representatives of the featured transportation entities have regularly participated in community meetings with the [COVID-19 Multicultural Advisory Committee](#), a governor-appointed body to decrease COVID-19 related racial disparities, to develop a systemic recovery that addresses transportation equity.



- **SLC Westside Transportation Equity Study.** All major transportation planning entities along the Wasatch Front, including the Salt Lake City Transportation Department, are currently partnering on the [Salt Lake City Westside Equity Project](#), which will produce a diverse, underrepresented, underserved stakeholder/ community engagement model for improved communication and feedback loops.
- **Adherence to Title VI & Environmental Justice Mandates.** UDOT, WFRC, and MAG adhere to federal mandates under Title VI of the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) to ensure that no one based on “color, or national origin, is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination” under any planning program. This promotes a more sustainable and inclusive development process.
- **Utah Unified Transportation Plan: Statewide Equity Performance Measures.** As part of a state-wide effort, the Utah Department of Transportation, Utah Transit Authority, and all regional metropolitan planning organizations are exploring and developing [statewide equity performance measures](#) to be implemented in the forthcoming Utah Unified Transportation Plan.
- **Utah’s Active Transportation Master Plan.** This is an ongoing collaborative effort across all key statewide transportation agencies to identify and implement thriving goals for biking and walking infrastructure. More information is to come to make this a public-facing resource.
- **Utah Compact On Racial Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion.** UDOT, WFRC, and UTA became signatories to the [Utah Compact on Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) committing themselves to operationalize anti-racist principles and actions into their frameworks.
- **Utah Healthy Communities Index Development (2022).** Led by the Utah Department of Health, along with their many partners such as UDOT, WFRC, UTA, and Get Healthy Utah, they will continue developing metrics that advance the consideration of health in transportation decision-making. Taking best practices developed for the California Healthy Places Index, the partners are developing their own criteria to measure how the transportation system affects the health of Utah’s communities.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

We applaud and acknowledge the great strides in transportation equity that our partners and leaders have made as we strive for stability and recovery from the pandemic. It is encouraging to see that equity is at the forefront of the conversations being had in terms of strategies, policies, research, and resource distribution. We are eager to continue working in partnership with these groups to advance solutions and pathways to thriving outcomes for all communities in Utah. All information was obtained directly from community representatives of each entity. For further questions, please email Claudia Loayza (cloayza@utah.gov).



RECOMMENDATIONS

After an overview of current and planned transportation equity initiatives, what else can be done? Here is a list of broad policy recommendations, community-driven initiatives and suggestions for equity-centered advancements. These are based on local and national best practices, as well as informed by community leaders and diverse stakeholders from discussions about the future of transportation equity to advance the principle and inclusive value of “Nothing About Us Without Us.”

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create better incentives for integrating equitable land use and transportation planning by collaborating in cross-agency initiatives and public-private partnerships (Malekafzali, 2009).
- Find opportunities for transportation investments in diverse and low-income communities to stimulate economic growth and provide access to jobs and critical services, while being mindful of gentrification triggers and the potential impacts of growing development on existing communities (Malekafzali, 2009).
- Shift the paradigm for equity measurements through equity impact statements. In addition to gathering and producing reports for environmental impacts, there can be key social and equity-related impacts that should be identified to address systemic disparities on disenfranchised communities. [All-In-Cities, an initiative of the research center, Policy Link](#), has provided detailed outlines for how to create equity impact statements related to a variety of development projects (All-In-Cities, n.d.).

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN INITIATIVES & DESIGNS

- Encourage transportation agencies and entities to host more community events to present services, job opportunities, and general awareness-building activities to build proximity and trust with communities.
- Use community events and services to gather community feedback and input to better understand the user-perception and data gap. [Wisconsin Community Health Improvement Plans and Processes \(CHIPP\) Infrastructure Improvement Project](#) has suggestions for how to do this using a system that factors in focus

groups, interviews, community surveys, and forums (Wisconsin Community Health, 2014).

- Train frontline transportation workers, such as highway patrol, bus drivers, train conductors, and transit law enforcement, on anti-discrimination and bystander intervention to promote safer and less intimidating transportation spaces. The [Transit Center](#) is a collective that has gathered multiple ways to promote community-specific interventions for safe and comfortable transportation experiences (van Eyken, 2021).

EQUITY-CENTERED DATA

- Ensure that regional, statewide, and local transportation plans include community voices and ground-truth experiences to inform physical design and implementation.
 - Incorporate race, income, and English proficiency as consistent data variables across transportation projects to evaluate social impact. The [Portland Equity Matrix](#) is a key example of how one city has operationalized equity data across all projects and initiatives (Portland Bureau of Transportation, 2017).
 - Implement a plan that uses some of the initiatives offered in [Blueprint Denver](#). Denver’s strategic plan uses a social equity framework to assess the city’s performance in terms of access and transportation equity. The plan measures access to opportunity by looking at access to transit using housing locations as a starting point. It also measures ease of access of transit networks to local/community centers to assess proximity to social capital and resources. The framework also includes an Equity Index that accounts for access to opportunity, assessing how many residents live within 0.25 miles walking distance to a grocery store and park or open space (Denver Community Planning & Development, 2019).

CONNECTIVITY & OPPORTUNITY

- Establish more small business and nonprofit transit ridership partnerships with organizations that have diverse workforces and service clientele. Building opt-in opportunities for transit access through established and trusted organizations can increase use and

“Nothing About Us Without Us”

awareness of transit options. It would be key to work through ethnic and diversity-focused chambers of commerce, such as the [Utah Hispanic Chamber of Commerce](#), the [Utah Black Chamber](#), the [Utah Asian Chamber of Commerce](#), and the [Utah LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce](#) to identify business partnerships.

- Consider ways for transit and transportation systems to be more empathy-centered, especially for those that operate in cyclically oppressive spaces such as those with lived experiences in incarceration and have limited options in navigating the built environment). Advocating for less punitive, more empowering alternatives to traffic and fare enforcement can help build opportunities for growth and autonomy. King County in Washington State is currently challenging the norm for fare enforcement which can inform future strategies (Eisinger et al., 2019).
- Transportation is a significant issue in rural communities, which characterize 16 of Utah's counties according to the Utah Division of Workforce Services' Community Development Office (Rural Planning Group, 2017). Transportation options limited to automobiles and those of driving age, result in lack of connectivity and mode options for youth, those that experience disabilities, and any who are unable to afford car costs. The [Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis](#) has compiled promising recommendations to increase transportation access in rural areas, specifically noting mobility on demand models that utilize technologies such as smartphones and mobile apps (Bayne et al., 2018).

PATHWAYS TO HEALTH

- Perform more regular assessments on the environmental and health impacts of negative air quality brought on by congestion and CO₂ emissions, especially as they relate to communities in to closer proximity highways and busy roads. Dr. [Daniel Mendoza](#) of the University of Utah has researched the impacts of air quality along the Wasatch Front and has found relationships between land use, racially and ethnically diverse communities, and income rates, indicating that "socioeconomically challenged communities suffer from both a lack of green spaces and their related mental and physical health benefits...in addition to worse environmental conditions shown by elevated pollutant levels" (Gabrielsen, 2020).
- Continue to align efforts with the Utah Healthy Communities Index Development (2022) in developing metrics that advance the consideration of health in transportation decision-making. Based on national

best practices, the index will be built off the current health index and measure how the transportation system affects the holistic health of Utah's communities (Utah Department of Health, 2018).

- Increase investment in walking and biking infrastructure in low-income, racially diverse areas to bridge gaps in active transportation access.
- Develop more transit hubs with multimodal education to encourage a social space to learn more about how these modes impact the various facets of a person's life and can dually improve health. This empowers communities to reclaim spaces that have been more car-centric, rather than human centric. Equiticity, a mobility justice organization based in Chicago, is working to create the "[Go Hub](#)," a community mobility center to socialize and bridge gaps in transportation while providing bike, scooter, and multimodal rentals as well as assistance for how to navigate local transit systems (Equiticity, 2019; Equiticity, 2020).
- In areas where there is available infrastructure but is less activated, having more robust programming and events that center active transportation and healthy living through a culturally-aware lens, tactile urbanism, and pop-up transportation designs can be impactful. Nationally, Black communities suffer higher health burdens related to heart disease and the [League of American Bicyclists released a collaborative report in 2013](#) to highlight community-based interventions to focus biking and active transportation programming in areas of most need.



Drivers of Equity in Transportation



DATA - Use Demographic Metrics, Including Race & Income.

Using demographic variables such as race, ethnicity, income, and Limited English Proficiency in assessing impacts of transportation can capture a multitude of intersectional experiences. This is also a strategy that helps operationalize the practice of identifying and mitigating gaps in services and resource access by understanding historical and systemic barriers.



OPPORTUNITY - Create Systems & Networks that Build Opportunity.

In addition to working towards connected communities, transportation equity leaders should assess interventions based on how they may increase opportunities for groups that have historically been most disenfranchised. This could include building multi-modal transportation hubs near low-income communities and building more walking-biking infrastructure where it lacks, but also taking heightened care to avoid displacement and gentrification.



CONNECTIVITY - Focus on Connectivity to Key Community Destinations.

Conventional transportation planning has largely been based evaluation and assessment on mobility or physical travel, versus connectivity and accessibility, which refers to people's ability to reach desired services and activities. Effective geographic distribution of key community assets and land uses must work in tandem with transportation planning to achieve connected communities that serve the dynamic needs of its residents.



SAFETY & COMFORT - Design for Safety & Comfort for All, Considering Backgrounds & Abilities.

Safety and comfort is intersectional. It depends on the location and its familiarity, as well the breadth of experiences and values that characterize a community. Transportation planners and key leaders should consider various human experiences such as gender, disability, race, ethnicity, family needs, and cultural and linguistic diversity when developing infrastructure, designs, and placemaking methods. Systems should reflect community identity and instill a sense of ownership for the transit or transportation service area.



ENGAGEMENT - Build Trust & Proximity with Marginalized Groups for Authentic Engagement.

Community engagement allows individual concerns and issues to be elevated to places of power where actionable steps can be taken. Building trust and proximity with marginalized groups by learning at their level what transportation gaps exist and then co-creating solutions "with" them, rather than "for" them, allows for increased community buy-in and long-range input.



HEALTHY CHOICES - Embed Pathways to Healthy Outcomes that Address Inequities.

Making the expansion of healthy choices a cornerstone goal to all transportation projects can help groups who belong to demographics that disproportionately struggle with chronic diseases and disorders that can be mitigated with a better-connected community. This could be done through operating from a social determinants of health (SDOH) framework, incentivizing air-wise transportation, and encouraging more walking and biking.

Credit: Inspired by [StreetLight Data](#), [U.S. Department of Transportation](#), and [Building Equity: An Idea Book for Fairer Cities](#).

CONCLUSION

Equitable transportation connects communities to key resources, jobs, gathering spaces, and can increase the quality of life and opportunity for current and future generations. The pandemic has magnified inequities in health and socioeconomic for largely disenfranchised and BIPOC groups, and the level of impact was influenced by how well communities could navigate their spaces to meet their needs. We honor the partners and key players in this work that are building equity into resource distribution and sustainable investments, and we invite more opportunities to collaborate. Building equitable solutions and practices within transportation will require a collective effort to push the boundaries of traditional transportation by increasing mobility access and choice—where everyone has equitable opportunities to work, learn, play, socialize, and thrive.

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INDIGENOUS LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

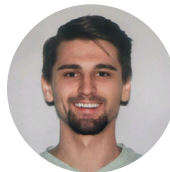
We acknowledge that this land in which we live, work, learn, and navigate statewide, which is named for the Ute Tribe, is the traditional and ancestral homeland of the Ute, Shoshone, Paiute, Goshute, and Diné Tribes. We honor the original ancestors of this land and also offer respect to all tribal communities. We recognize the enduring relationship that exists between many Indigenous peoples and their traditional homelands. As we engage with each other in the work of transportation equity and land use planning, we give respect to the land we are on and recognize tribal communities as its original stewards.

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Claudia Loayza is passionate about the intersections of opportunity, place, and justice. City planning became her conduit for this drive and she believes that the state of a community depends on how accessible it is for people to work, play, navigate, and thrive in their environments, especially for historically marginalized groups.

She graduated from Brigham Young University with a Bachelor of Science where she studied the crosses between urban design and public health. She is currently attending the University of Utah's Masters in City and Metropolitan Planning program to better address disparities in city planning, health, transportation, and community engagement from an equity lens.



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